

negotiate a peace—that attempt to get membership—state membership in the United Nations will not succeed.

I think the Palestinians want to achieve a state through the international community, but they're not prepared yet to give peace to Israel in return. And my hope is that there will be other leaders in the world, responsible leaders, who will heed your call, Mr. President, and oppose this effort to shortcut peace negotiations, in fact, to avoid them. Because I think that avoiding these negotiations is bad for Israel, bad for the Palestinians, and bad for peace.

Now, I know that these leaders are under enormous pressure, and I know that they're al-

so—and this—from personal experience, I can tell you the automatic majority is against Israel. But I think that standing your ground, taking this position of principle—which is also, I think, the right position to achieve peace—I think this is a badge of honor. And I want to thank you for wearing that badge of honor, and also, I would express my hope that others will follow your example, Mr. President. So I want to thank you for that.

President Obama. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:01 a.m. at United Nations Headquarters.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda of Japan in New York City *September 21, 2011*

President Obama. I want to welcome Prime Minister Noda and his delegation to New York City and to the United States. As all of you are aware, we have an extraordinary alliance with Japan. They are one of our closest friends, our closest allies. We have worked cooperatively on a range of issues related to security, related to economics. And the bonds of friendship between our peoples is equally strong.

Prime Minister Noda and I have had the opportunity to speak by phone, although this is the first time that we've had a meeting face to face. I know that he, like all of us, has some extraordinary challenges that we have to address. And I know that at the top of his list is rebuilding Japan in the aftermath of the horrific tsunami that occurred. I've repeatedly pledged that America will do everything that we can to make sure that that rebuilding is a success.

At the same time, obviously, we have other important work to do together. As the two largest economies in the world, we have to continue to promote growth that can help put our people to work and to improve standards of living. We have to modernize our alliance to meet the needs of the 21st century. And so I'm looking forward to a very productive discussion and what I'm sure will be an excellent working

relationship with the Prime Minister as well as his team.

Prime Minister Noda. The biggest priority and the immediate challenge for the Noda Government is the recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake disaster and the degrading situation with the nuclear power plant. But at the same time, even from before the earthquake took place, we had a lot of challenges, both in domestically and in foreign policy areas. And those cohorts must be dealt with one by one and thereby creating a stable policy. That's the challenge and—for my Government.

My—our top priority is the reconstruction from the disaster of the earthquake in Japan, the great Japan—Great East Japan Earthquake. The United States has provided enormous amount of support, including Operation Tomodachi and a lot of efforts made by Ambassador Roos. And on behalf of the all Japanese nationals, I thank you. And thank you for your support.

I had a firm belief that the Japan-U.S. alliance is the key pillar of our foreign policy. And through the assistance that we received after the earthquake, this bridge has become an even more unwavering one. And the Japanese

public also were assured, and we recognize the significance and importance of our alliance.

I was reported that the meeting between our Foreign Minister Gemba and Secretary of State Clinton was a very fruitful one, and we would like to further deepen and enhance the bilateral alliance between our two countries in the three major fields of security, economy, and also the cultural and people-to-people exchange.

One worry that I've had is that there is an emerging concern that once recovering the economy we might be drawn back into another recession, and Japan and the United States must work on the economic growth and the fiscal situation at the same time. And you have

the presence of Secretary Geithner here, and we have to work together at the forum centers—the G-20 and other multilateral forum—and to coordinate with each other. And I'm looking forward to having such discussions with you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. at United Nations Headquarters. Prime Minister Noda referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Koichiro Gemba of Japan. Prime Minister Noda spoke in Japanese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations in New York City September 21, 2011

Secretary-General Ban. President Obama, Excellencies, distinguished heads of state and government, Your Highnesses, Your Majesties, distinguished ministers, ladies and gentlemen: Welcome to the United Nations. Welcome to our common house.

We are off to a flying start today, I must say. Thank you, President Obama, for your inspiring oratory, and more, for its vital importance.

As ever, we thank the United States and its generous people for hosting United Nations during last 66 years. This is the 66th session. Let me offer a special word of thanks to New Yorkers. In the last month, they have faced an earthquake, then a hurricane, now a perfect storm of the world's leaders, creating lot of traffic jams. [*Laughter*] And we are very much grateful for their patience.

Let me say straight off, this is my fifth lunch with the distinguished leaders of the world, and I'm very much grateful for your strong support. In that regard, I am very glad that it is not my last lunch, and we will have five more lunches in the coming 5 years. [*Applause*] Thank you very much. Taking this opportunity, I would like to really sincerely express my appreciation and thanks to all of the heads of state and gov-

ernment for your strong support. You can count on me. And it's a great and extraordinary honor to serve this great organization.

Mr. President, 50 years ago this week, your predecessor, President John F. Kennedy, addressed the General Assembly. He came, he said, to join with other world leaders, and I quote, "to look across this world of threats to a world of peace," unquote. Looking out upon the world, we see no shortages of threats. And closer to home, wherever we might live, we see the familiar struggles of political life: left versus right, rich versus poor, and up versus down. Seldom, however, has the debate been more emotional or strident; yet seldom has the need for unity been greater.

We know the challenges. I won't reprise my speech, except to say that we do indeed have a rare and generational opportunity to make a lasting difference in people's lives. If there is a theme in all that has been said today by the leaders, it would be the imperative of unity, solidarity in realizing that opportunity. We must act together. There is no opt-out clause for global problem-solving. Every country has something to give in and to gain.